

MARCH 21, 2021
FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

PRELUDE — *In Deepest Night*

ROSE MARY

*In deepest night, in darkest days, when harps are hung,
no songs we raise, when silence must suffice as praise,
yet sounding in us quietly there is the song of God.*

*When friend was lost, when love deceived, dear Jesus wept,
God was bereaved; so with us in our grief God grieves,
and round about us mournfully there are the tears of God.*

*When through the waters winds our path, around us pain,
Around us death, deep calls to deep, a saving breath,
And found beside us faithfully there is the love of God.*

CALL to WORSHIP

Molly Ramsey

One: A sky strewn with stars beyond our counting.

All: Darkness is for hoping.

One: Exhausted sleep turned into an all-night struggle.

All: Darkness is for wrestling.

One: Songs of lament are lifted again and again.

All: Darkness is for healing.

One: The curiosity of the soul brings me back to God.

All: Darkness is for exploring.

One: Questions and worries and wonders appear in the dark and we carry them into the dawn.

All: Today we gather to worship, celebrating the mystery of our God. Let us worship God together!

PRAYER of CONFESSION

Pastor Alex Lester-Abdalla

There are times, we confess, when we seek to confine you, O God. We want you to act in ways we can predict and comprehend easily. We regularly turn you into an idol for ourselves. There are also times, O God, when the questions and doubts of our hearts cause us to turn away from you entirely, to abandon faith, to stick with what we know. We desire certainty and not mystery. Free us, O God, from the need to control you, so that we might learn to love you and seek you when all is clear and when all is dark.

(Time for silent prayer and confession.)

PROMISE of FORGIVENESS

One: Our God is merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. God hears our cries: restore to me the joy of your salvation and uphold me with your Spirit. Friends, believe the good news of God's grace:

All: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!

RESPONSE to GOD'S GRACE — *Glory to the Father*

GLORIA PATRI

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever.
Amen. Amen. Amen.*

SCRIPTURE READING — *John 3:14-21*

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."

One: This is the Word of the Lord.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

MEDITATION

Pastor Rachel Rhodes

AFFIRMATION of FAITH — *Apostles' Creed*

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

MUSICAL MEDITATION — *Come and Fill Our Hearts*

CONFITEMINI DOMINO

*Come and fill our hearts with your peace.
You alone, O Lord, are holy.
Come and fill our hearts with your peace.
Alleluia!*

POSTLUDE — *Be Thou My Vision*

SLANE

*Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
naught be all else to me, save that thou art;
thou my best thoughts, by day or by night,
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.*

*Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true Word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord;
thou my soul's shelter, and thou my high tower;
raise thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.*

*Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise;
thou mine inheritance, now and always;
thou and thou only, first in my heart,
High King of Heaven, my treasure thou art.*

*High King of Heaven, my victory won,
may I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be my vision, O Ruler of all.*

QUESTIONS *for* REFLECTION *at* HOME

- When have you spent time in the darkness, questioning?
- How might God be seeking to speak into your questions?

OTHERS PARTICIPATING IN TODAY'S SERVICE

Tim Carpenter – Director of Music

Pat Guth – Organist

Video Ministry Volunteers

Photos may be found on unsplash.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS

****Please note all announcements for Sunday bulletins are due by noon the Tuesday before they are to be published. Please email announcements to Bulletin@MPCusa.net.***

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES

Adult Education Sunday school will have a great opportunity to engage in a Lenten series with Barbara Brown Taylor's book *Learning to Walk in the Dark*. Our Sunday school classes are based on a chapter from Taylor's book that corresponds to our Lenten sermon series. Each week we will have the opportunity to gather around a reading, lesson, and sermon! Please let Pastor Alex know via email at alexlester-abdalla@mpcusa.net if you are interested in following along with the book, so you can get a copy and have the ability to participate. The cost of the book is \$15, which may be donated to the MPC Education Budget, or you may buy the book on your own. If you would rather not read the book, that is okay too! Each week's class will be accessible and meaningful whether you read the chapter or not. Please join us in this unique Lenten opportunity!

MPC Adult Sunday School is currently being held every Sunday morning over Zoom from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. Please contact Pastor Alex at alexlester-abdalla@mpcusa.net if you are interested in joining any Adult Education classes. You will be added to the email chain which includes the Zoom link for each session.

MPC SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

Calling all high school seniors and college students – did you know MPC provides six scholarships to high school seniors and college students? Scholarship information and applications are now available on the MPC website. Scholarship application deadline is April 15, 2021. If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Alex.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY IS COMING TO BRISTOL BOROUGH!

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! - Psalm 133:1

MPC has a history of supporting Habitat for Humanity, both financially and "hands on", especially being a huge supporter of *Faith Build 2019*. *Faith Build 2021* is a project of Habitat Humanity and has designated Bristol Borough as one of its locations. This will be an opportunity for faith groups and congregations based in Bucks County to come together and put their faith into action. Let's make MPC one of those congregations!

There are many ways and levels in which MPC (that's you!) can get involved. It may be providing a prayer early in the morning for the crew that day, assisting with a lunch for the day, joining a construction crew for the day, painting with friends, supporting the project financially, and the list goes on. The *Faith Build 2021* will take place soon as the current site is being prepared with the dedication planned for this Fall! Opportunities abound with the Habitat Restore locations as well. In the meantime, prayerfully consider how you may become a part of this most worthwhile, faith project. There will be a lot more information coming soon, including sign-up opportunities. If you have questions, please contact Ray Hendrickson at 215 495-3114.

EASTER MEMORIALS & HONORARIUMS ORDER FORM—DEADLINE SUNDAY, MARCH 21

Have you considered honoring, celebrating, or remembering a family member, friend, or loved one this Eastertide? Contributions to our Memorial Fund can be made, not just for remembering a loved one who has passed, but also for honoring someone in your life now. **Please fill in the tear-off below and return it with your check in the total amount of your option(s).**

Easter Plants—Please note changes to the Memorial donation for Easter Plants. The Plants purchased will be for Deacons to deliver to homebound members during the Lenten season.

Music Fund—Memorial contributions to this fund help to supplement the music ministry program. In the past these funds have been used to invest in ORFF instruments for enhancing the children's music program, hand bell equipment, guest clinicians, and additional musicians for special music offerings. Contributions of any amount are welcome. **To be listed in bulletin, please submit your form by Sunday, March 21.**

Deacons' Food Basket Program—In addition to free-will donations received by the Deacons, you are welcome to contribute to the Food Basket Program as a gift or memorial to loved ones by using the form below. **To be listed in the bulletin, please submit by Sunday, March 21.**

Easter Memorial & Honorarium Contributions

*Please do not add the memorial contribution amount to your pledge payment!
Make checks payable to MPC with the type of memorial noted on the memo line.*

I would like to purchase an Easter plant for the Deacons to deliver
to a homebound member during the Lenten season.
The cost is \$9.00 per plant.

_____ **Easter Plants** Number of Plants: _____ Amount attached _____

I (we) wish to make the following contribution(s) to:

_____ **Music Fund** Please find \$ _____ attached for this fund.

_____ **Deacons' Food Basket Program.** Please find \$ _____ attached for this fund.

Given by: _____

Phone _____

“ In loving memory of ” “ In celebration of ” “ To give thanks for ” (circle one)

Please print exactly as you wish it to appear in the bulletin and return to the Church Office.

Deadlines for Submission: Flowers, Music and Food Basket Contributions—Sunday, March 21, 2021